THE Reconstructionist

Vol. IX. October 18, 1943 Tishri 19, 5704 No. 12

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Dedicated to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization, to the upbuilding of Israel's ancient homeland, and to the furtherance of univeral freedom, justice and peace.

the Reconstructionist

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WITH ALL DUE MODESTY

From a letter from a friend in the army:

Here's my solitary buck, so please send "The Reconstructionist" for the coming year. Can't say that I agree with you on a great many points, but we're born to disagree and that's to be expected. Your publication and literature will have a wider circulation in the army after my friends and I have given it the works. I'll send it home for future use. . . .

P. S.—Your articles on Jewish music (among others) are exceptionally interesting . . . would welcome more on the subject.

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EDITORIALS

SUKKAT SHALOM

THE prayer that God spread over us His Sukkah of peace is expressive of the common yearning at the heart of mankind. It is significant that the symbol of peace and security is the Sukkah, a monument to the simple pastoral life of a nomad people. In that life, as conceived by the biblical authors who contrasted it with the more technically advanced civilization of their day, there prevailed a scarcity of material goods. But this was more than compensated for by spiritual values: trust in God, brotherhood among men, equality, freedom and cooperation.

In the era immediately following the war, great masses of men will be left homeless by the devastation it has wrought. There will be an almost literal fulfilment of Hosea's prophecy, that God would bring the people back into the Wilderness. Will there also be a fulfilment of his prophecy that, in the wilderness, the people will hear the voice of God speaking tenderly to them words of solace and cheer? There will, if men adhere to the ideals which Jewish tradition associates with the period of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. The war should give the *coup de grace* to the era of self-seeking materialistic individualism. The insecurity of the edifice built on the selfish acquisitiveness of the strong in exploiting the weak has been laid bare by the war. Political programs that regard as sacrosanct "the American standard of living" and will brook no lowering of it even though masses are starving in other countries should be recognized as a menace to peace. The slogan of "freedom of enterprise" should not be used as a screen behind which men will struggle for the power to dominate and exploit. Men should never again, in the name of that freedom, be permitted to gamble with other people's money and other people's lives and then claim huge profits for themselves as remuneration for hazarding their superfluous wealth.

The "tabernacle of peace" must be reared on the moral foundation of freedom, equality and fraternal cooperation among men. Rationing has taught us to share at least the necessities of life and all goods of which there is scarcity, not on the basis of one's acquisitive power and resourcefulness but of human need. The income tax has been used not only as a means of obtaining revenue but as a means of redistributing wealth more equitably and curbing the inflation which enriches the speculator and impoverishes the worker. These social gains must be

kept and enlarged after the war, if we are not to repeat the mistakes that have brought it upon us.

Now that victory is beginning to loom on the horizon, the observance of Sukkot helps renew our faith in the coming of a peace that shall usher in the "era of the common man." It is this which makes it possible for us to observe Sukkot as a season of cheer and rejoicing despite the anxiety and suffering of our day.

SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS ON THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONFERENCE

THE convening of the American Jewish Conference will remain for many years to come one of the great moments in the life of American Jewry in this generation. The high level on which the discussions, in the plenary sessions and in committee, were carried on; the earnestness of the delegates; the excellence of the resolutions adopted—all contributed to rendering the Conference the high water mark in contemporary Jewish history.

The moral influence of this Conference has been correspondingly high. Those national organizations whose policies did not coincide with the overwhelming sentiment of the delegates were held close to the Conference by its enormous centripetal force. They could not secede and still retain status in the eyes of American Israel. The American Council for Judaism was dealt a blow at the Conference from which it will probably not recover. And as time goes on, the prestige of the American Jewish Conference is bound to grow, for it is established on sound foundations of Jewish self-government.

How vitally necessary it is to have an organization that speaks with the authentic voice of American Israel has been dramatically underscored by the recent revelations in *PM*, the New York daily, of Ambassador Steinhardt's efforts, back in 1940, to keep refugees out of the country. Since Mr. Steinhardt is a Jew, his opinions must have been given careful consideration. Certainly, a proposal by a Jew to keep other Jews out must have been received most enthusiastically by exclusionists; they must have judged that all Jews felt the same way. What better reason for keeping the bars down! An American Jewish Conference is the only instrument which could have neutralized the effect of such arbitrary action on the part of a single Jew.

If, however, the Conference hopes to be acknowledged universally as the official spokesman for American Jews, it must, so far as is possible, represent *all* the Jews. No loophole should be left through which dissident individuals or groups can slip back into individualistic utterances or actions. To be sure, it would be ungracious indeed to undervalue the extraordinary achievement of the Conference in having created a democratically elected body representative of broad areas of Jewish life. For the first time in a generation, Jews went to the ballot box and elected their leaders; this in itself was no mean accomplishment. But certain realities must be faced: inadequacies in the democratic process could definitely be observed. These ought to be corrected as soon as the opportunities present themselves.

In many communities, the system of "bullet" voting came in for considerable criticism. We are told that individuals practically unknown in communal affairs led the ticket in several cities. This would have been impossible except for the system which allowed factions to concentrate their votes on one candidate. What the alternative should be we are not, at the moment, prepared to say. The interim committee of the Conference should make this one of the first problems to be studied.

Another serious issue is the one raised by those Jews whose sole affiliation with Jewish life lies in the area of philanthropy. Some have expressed themselves quite vehemently on this point; they insist that they were not represented at the Conference and that they should have been represented. They assert that philanthropy is a legitimate Jewish enterprise. Certainly, no one can deny that *tzedakah* is and always has been one of the prime functions of Jewish community life. On the other hand, one can readily sympathize with the arrangement committee of the Conference that excluded those organizations which are nothing more than fund-raising machines.

We believe that there is much to be gained by exerting every effort to include within the Conference those Jews who are interested in philanthropy only. If they came to the Conference, saw the people, listened to the discussions, caught some glimpse of *k'lal yisrael,* they might begin to understand the deep-rooted hopes and aspirations of Jewry. They might learn what it is that stirs the emotions, and stimulates the imaginations of the masses. It would be an excellent education for those who regard the Jewish people as a burdensome conglomerate of poor relations—and nothing more. Let the philanthropists overcome their sense of detachment; let them become involved in the struggle of Jewry to survive. They will not be able to escape the experience of some men of similar outlook who witnessed demonstration after demonstration of Zionist fervor and finally were impelled to remark, "We never knew the Jews felt this way about Palestine."

In addition to perfecting the machinery of democratic representation, the interim committee should, by all means, strive to implement the resolutions of the Conference sessions; those resolutions may soon be forgotten unless action is taken. Finally, the committee should carry on the fine work which was inaugurated with the publication of the volume of facts and opinions on problems of post-war Jewry. Since a coordinated effort has been launched, it should be continued. Various organizations continue to make studies of these problems; the committee should attempt to coordinate these efforts, and present to the Jewish community, from time to time, reports on the progress of these studies.

The American Jewish Conference holds great promise. Everything in our power should be done to bring that promise to realization.

A JURIDICAL FRAME-UP

AN old trick of the perpetrators of evil is to vilify their victims. The Palestine Government has used this trick in the trial of Leb Sirkin, trade union official, and Abraham Rachlin, taxi driver, accused of buying three hundred stolen guns and 105 rounds of ammunition from British soldiers. The Palestine Government has converted an ordinary gun-running trial, which is a routine matter in that country, especially among the Arabs, who are constantly tried for gun-running or smuggling of weapons, into an accusation against the entire Jewish people. The Jews are charged with no lesser crimes than disturbing the peace of Palestine and obstructing the war effort. The trial judge finds a large, ramified conspiracy on the part of the Jews to endanger Palestine's security and to hinder the prosecution of the war. To quote the president of the court, Mayor Lawrence Russel: "The trial has proven the existence of a large, embracing conspiracy to obtain arms and ammunition from His Majesty's forces. The offenses of which both accused are charged are a result of this conspiracy, which is against the security of the country's inhabitants, as well as a hindrance to

the war effort." Major Baxter, the prosecuting attorney, charges that the accused were part of "a sinister organization extending throughout the East and especially throughout Palestine." One almost sees the shades of the "Elders of Zion" stalking across the landscape of the Jewish homeland.

The civilized world has been under the impression that the Arab terrorists had disturbed the peace in Palestine. The world, too, had believed that the Jews, the principal victims of the Nazis, were the most eager and determined for their annihilation. The Jews have been clamoring, and still do, for the right to organize their own army to participate in the war as one of the allied nations. Even without an army of their own, the Jews have sent some thirty thousand young men to fight in Africa and Italy, despite the refusal to give recognition to the Jewish people. All of Palestine was converted, naturally on a modest scale, into a supplementary arsenal of democracy. But now, by decision of the British military court, the Jews stand accused of being the disturbers of the peace in Palestine and, what is more grotesque, of organizing a conspiracy to hinder the prosecution of the war by the Allied Nations. The accusation would be laughable, were it not so tragically sinister in its implications. It can be interpreted only as an attempt on the part of Britain to pave the way for further application of the policy of the infamous White Paper and to destroy all our legitimate aspirations in Palestine.

The trial was widely publicized. Correspondents were brought from Cairo especially to influence American public opinion. The accusations are altogether too absurd, and we are confident that American opinion will not be taken in by such a bald crudity. The Jewish people will appeal from the verdict to all the higher courts, going ultimately to the King if necessary. But aside from such appeals, we shall continue undeterred to demand from Great Britain that it fulfill the original promise implicit in the Balfour Declaration and that it help to establish in Palestine a Jewish commonwealth after this war.

A FEW QUESTIONS TO THE SOVIET JEWISH DELEGATION

TO Professor Michoels and Colonel Feffer, the members of the Soviet Jewish Delegation, the traditional farewell, *tzetekhem leshalom.*

We welcomed your visit although we were never clear as to its purposes. We still hope that you did not come originally with the intention of convincing American Jewry of the danger of racism and fascism to the Jewish people. Long before the Soviet Union were attacked by the Nazis, the overwhelming majority of American Jewry had been well aware of what Nazi victory would mean to the Jews everywhere. We watched in agony the terrible developments in the Polish inferno, while you failed to utter one sigh. This at a time when your fellow-communists in this country were trying to persuade us that it would be of no material difference to Jews whether the British or the German "imperialists" were to win the present war. If you had come to tell us merely that the Soviet Union is in need of material help and active sympathy from the American public, we would have said that a delegation should have been sent to other religious and national groups, least of all to the Jews. For Jews, more aware of the danger of Nazism, have responded better than any other group to the various relief activities on behalf of fighting Russia.

We prefer to assume, therefore, that at least an important part of your mission was to illustrate to us the new unity that is springing up between the Soviet Jewish community and the other Jewish communities in the free countries. As a mat-

ter of fact, you emphasized this unity against freedom. You yourselves and your spokesmen filled the columns in the newspapers and the radio waves with appeals for unity. If such be the case, we regret that your mission has been most unsuccessful. And we prefer to speak to you frankly, because we fear that you may misinterpret the enthusiastic response which you received from the Jewish community as spokesmen for the heroic Red Army, and credit it wrongly to the presentation of the terms and purposes of your mission.

Frankly, we are not satisfied with lip-service unity against fascism. There is real unity on this score. Such unity existed long before the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. It is seen in the participation of Jews everywhere in the armies and underground activities of the United Nations and in the demand for a Jewish army in Palestine. Such unity need not be expressed in terms of one all-inclusive organization, for it exists in the heart of every thinking Jew who is aware of what fascism is capable of doing to Jews.

But there are higher levels of unity for which there is a need: the unity of the Jewish people as a people and as a faith; the unity of their historical tradition and their survival needs; the unity for post-war reconstruction; the unity for the upbuilding of Palestine; and the unity for saving the Jews under Nazi rule today by joint action of the United Nations, of which your country is also a partner. Such unity cannot, as you expressed yourselves, wait till the Nazis are defeated. The foundations of the world of tomorrow are being laid today. The fate of Palestine is being determined day by day in the British Foreign Office and the American State Department, as well as by the machinations of the Palestine government. The problem of saving the European Jews is an immediate and pressing one. To say that it can wait till the defeat of Nazism is to repeat the shibboleths uttered by those who refuse to take action.

And there are other things which you failed to explain to us. We are extremely anxious to learn of the real effects of the change in Soviet policy on the Jewish community in the USSR. How is this new awareness of common fate of Jews all over the world expressed? Does it find its expression in the synagogue and religious life? Will your government give it the opportunity to express itself by allowing Russian Jews to unite with Jews of other lands on the problem of Palestine and other post-war problems? Will its cultural expression take the normal course of a revival of Hebrew in the Soviet Union, and has your government taken any steps to provide for such a possibility? Will it find its way through the revival of Jewish community life, which in your country was a model for the rest of the world before the Yevsektsia brutally brought it to an end? The Greek Orthodox Church has been permitted to organize itself on a national basis; will the synagogue be given the same rights? Above all, will you give us, survivalist Jews, the opportunity to address our long cut-off brethren in the Soviet Union directly? Will you be followed by another delegation of Soviet Jews, more representative of all shades of opinion? Will the American Jewish Conference and the *Asefat Hanivharim,* the representative bodies of the two largest free Jewish communities outside the Soviet Union, be permitted to speak to their brethren in your country directly?

We want you to tell those who sent you that the accolades which your visit elicited have not hushed the voices asking these very vital questions. And we hope that this New Year will see the beginnings of real unity between the different communities in world Jewry. It is up to you and the people who sent you.

REALITIES AND VALUES

NOW AND AGAIN THERE EMANate from sources close to the Palestine government vague rumors of impending conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. These are designed to give the impression that Jews and Arabs cannot live together in peaceful cooperation. One never is told by these sources of information about such items as are contained in the reports of the Labor Palestine Information bureau about organized cooperation of Arab and Jewish labor. At a recent conference of 72 Arabs and 108 Jewish labor representatives, workers on government projects demanded living allowance equivalent to that received by factory workers: sick benefits, vacations and carfare for workers living at a distance. Arab representatives at the conference admitted that they had been hesitant at first about joining Jewish labor. But, after disappointment with independent Arab unions and after observing the success of the Union of Palestine Labor, they decided to join the latter. One suspects that the Palestine government is not only not anxious to have such facts known; it does not want them to exist.

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THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE Union of American Hebrew Congregations voted at its meeting on October 3rd to approve all resolutions of the American Jewish Conference except the one demanding establishment of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. That resolution it decided to submit to the Council, which is the supreme governing body of the Union. At the Conference, the representatives of the Union had not voted on the Palestine issue. It is apparent that the members of the American Council for Judaism who are members of the Union would like to see it withdraw from the Conference and take a pronounced anti-Zionist stand. If it did, it would involve itself in an open repudiation of its spiritual leadership as represented in the Central Conference of American Rabbis which is predominantly sympathetic to Zionism. At any rate, the Union would be making a fatal mistake if it flouted the overwhelming sentiment of American Jewry by taking an anti-Zionist stand.

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ONE OF THE MANY ACTIVITIES which Dr. Israel Goldstein is planning for his administration as President of the Z.O.A. is the organization of local conferences of non-Zionists throughout the country to be addressed by Zionist leaders. We like his missionary spirit which will not give up the non-Zionist as a lost soul. We believe him justified in his faith that every Jew who has not been thoroughly infected with Jewish self-hate is a potential Zionist. Unfortunately, great numbers of Jews have never heard about Zionism except from prejudiced sources or in ways that made it appear irrelevant to their interests. That condition Dr. Goldstein now proposes to remedy. We hope he will succeed.

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CONSIDERABLE PUBLICITY IS being given to the case of Alton Levy, a sergeant in the U. S. Army, who has been demoted to the rank of Private, and punished for having spoken up in clear-cut language against the discrimination which Negroes suffer in the armed forces. This is not the first time that the charge has been made of unfair treatment of Negroes, and it is about time that our Commander-in-Chief denounce race hatred and race discrimination in the forces under his command. In the meantime, Private Levy has been denied his freedom, and he is bearing the brunt of the battle. Those who believe that this war is being fought for the four freedoms ought to let

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A Religious Fellowship to Raise the Standard of Jewish Leadership

By EUGENE KOHN

MUCH has been written about the undemocratic character of Jewish community life in our day. The leadership of Jewish institutions has largely fallen into the hands of persons who are not qualified for the task, because they lack not only an understanding of Jewish life but even an interest in maintaining it. Yet they occupy key positions in the Jewish community because most Jews are too distraught, confused and preoccupied with problems of personal adjustment to challenge their leadership. The Jewish public tends to put confidence in "successful" people, assuming that the qualities which made them successful in their personal careers would necessarily give them success in their public undertakings. From time to time, the Jewish public awakens to the fact that the heads of its communal institutions view Jewish problems more in the light of their own personal or class interests than of the true interests of Jewry as a whole. But most Jews consider these men indispensable because of their power and prestige, and they do not know to whom else to turn for direction and guidance.

The truth is that the Jewish masses themselves, as well as their leaders, have, to a great extent, lost the will to live as Jews. In times of crisis, they react emotionally with demands for Jewish solidarity and unity, but, in their daily life, they display little faith in the value of Judaism and little interest in conserving it. That is why assimilationist and escapist Jews are often vested with authority in Jewish life although the majority of Jews are not consciously assimilationist and would want some form of Judaism to survive.

The Need for a New Type of Jewish Leadership

It must be clear that, if this situation is to be remedied, a new type of leadership must assert itself. If Jewish life is to be given the character of a democratic society organized to insure its continued existence under the most favorable material and spiritual conditions attainable—if it is to be redeemed from chaos, disintegration and defeatism—the initiative to effect this redemption cannot come from those circles that have themselves succumbed to the depressing effects of present conditions. It must come from that small group of persons who appreciate Jewish values, who have faith in the possibilties of Jewish life and who have a passionate desire to enable Judaism to survive in the American environment. That group may be small but it represents the aristocracy of Jewry, the persons who are best qualified to give guidance and direction to Jewish life. If Jewish life is to be democratized, they will have to democratize it.

The salvation of Judaism through such an aristocratic minority is not without precedent in Jewish history. From the days of the "men of the Great Synagogue" (5th century, B.C.E.) down to the era of the Emancipation in the 18th and 19th centuries, the *talmide hakhamim,* the men who were learned in the Torah tradition, set the tone of Jewish life as a whole. Their contribution to democracy is significant. Though constituting an aristocracy by reason of their superior qualifications for responsible leadership, they never sought to become an exclusive or hereditary caste. From their origin,

they acted on the slogan, "Raise up many disciples." Their recognition of merit wherever it was found enabled them to supersede in importance the oligarchy of the hereditary priesthood, until it became a maxim that "a bastard who is a *talmid hakham* takes precedence over a high priest who is ignorant of Torah." The authority of this spiritual aristocracy was enhanced by the fact that it claimed no special worldly privilege. On the contrary, its regimen was often that described in the Baraita of Rabbi Meir (the sixth chapter of Pirke Abot as found in the traditional Prayer Book), "A morsel of bread with salt shalt thou eat, and thou shalt drink water by measure; thou shalt sleep upon the ground and live a life of trouble the while thou toilest in the Torah."

For our own day, however, a knowledge of the Torah tradition cannot be the sole qualification for leadership in Jewish life, although ignorance of that tradition is certainly a disqualification. Knowledge of the traditions of Israel's past is no guarantee of wisdom in solving the problems of its future. That future is now so closely involved in the future of the peoples among whom we live that, in addition to a knowledge of Torah, a realistic and intelligent approach to social political and economic problems of our day is required to qualify one for participation in the direction of Jewish affairs. The capacity and willingness to learn, integrity of character, intellectual honesty, Jewish loyalty and social sympathy—these are the qualities that should be required of those who would guide Jewish communal life in our day. Happily, men possessed of these qualities are to be found, though not in great numbers, in American Jewry. But they are scattered and unorganized. They tend to be discouraged by the discrepancy between Jewish life as they would like to see it and Jewish life as it actually is today. If they could be gathered into a cooperating fellowship on a simple platform of Judaism as a religious civilization, they would wield an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. For they would accept responsibilities that others shirk, would do competenly what others bungle, would humbly seek first to reconstruct their own Jewish life and then to "raise up many disciples" by example as well as by precept.

The Projected Reconstructionist Fellowship

A religious fraternity or fellowship of Jews who are prepared to consecrate themselves to the advancement of Judaism as a religious civilization has long been under discussion in Reconstructionist circles. Such a fellowship should welcome to its ranks all who are willing to assume the responsibilities which membership would involve, be they laymen or rabbis, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. But it should require of its members a definite commitment to a Jewish religious life. The requirements for membership would have to be flexible enough to allow for that diversity in unity which Reconstructionism regards as both necessary and desirable. But they should be so defined as to demand of members an active effort to improve the quality of Jewish life in accordance with the principles and program of the Reconstructionist Platform. Members must undertake to identify themselves as Jews in their public as well as in their private relations, to maintain Judaism in the home, to affiliate with a Jewish congregation and participate in public worship, to give time to Jewish reading and study, to take part in the Zionist movement, and to live lives of moral integrity and decency. *There should be no financial requirement whatsoever for membership in the Reconstructionist Fellowship.* Through its collective activities, the Fellowship would activate this small group of the best spirits in Amer-

ican Jewry. It would give them an *esprit de corps* and an aristocratic sense of *noblesse oblige*.

This Fellowship will soon be initiated. Steps in this direction have already been taken by a number of rabbis who have agreed to interest laymen in their congregations in forming chapters of the Fellowship. These chapters should meet not less frequently than once every two weeks for study and action. Their studies should be directed to intensifying their understanding of Jewish life with a view to improving it. The Jewish past should be studied not from the escapist point of view, to seek refuge from the frustrations of contemporary life in the contemplation of past glories, nor from the apologetic point of view, to show that the Jewish record is no worse, and perhaps better, than that of other peoples. It should be studied in a religious spirit, that looks to history for a clue to the divine meaning of Jewish life, to the values that have made the Jewish people seek survival and to the conditions that Jews today must fulfil in order to realize those values.

As action groups, the chapters should engage in various projects for the enrichment of their own Jewish life and that of their families and for enhancing the Jewishness of their congregations and communities. They should scrutinize the workings of the synagogues, schools, and other Jewish institutions with which their members are affiliated and devise and carry out plans for their improvement.

The Fellowship should meet periodically in a national convention and its chapters should be stimulated and guided in their work by the national office of the Fellowship. Its activities should be subventioned by the Jewish Reconstrtuctionist Foundation and it should endeavor, on its part, to increase the membership and resources of the Foundation. Eventually chapters of the Fellowship may be organized among other than synagogue groups, but some form of affiliation with the synagogue would, in accordance with Reconstructionist principles, remain a requirement of membership for the individual even though his chapter may not be connected with any particular congregation. For it is only by stressing the importance of the synagogue that Jewish civilization in the diaspora can retain its religious character.

The Fellowship As An Instrument for Implementing Reconstructionism

The projected Fellowship should prove a most important instrument by which the Reconstructionist movement will be able actually to effect a reconstruction and revival of Jewish life in America. The masses of Jews do not know, and have little curiosity to find out the meaning of Reconstructionism. As a result, the impression has arisen that Reconstructionism is a recondite theory which can only concern a few intellectuals disciplined in philosophic thinking. Reconstructionism *has* its philosophy, which can be fully apprehended only by persons who have a capacity for philosophic reasoning. But Reconstructionism *is not* a philosophy. It is a way of living a Jewish life suited to the conditions of modern times. It is, in essence, a religious movement with a strong appeal to the emotions and the will, no less than to the intellect. Any earnest and intelligent reading of the Reconstructionist Platform will show the stress it puts on esthetic, social and religious sentiments, and on both ceremonial and ethical behavior.

Nor is the concept of Judaism as a religious civilization particularly complicated, or difficult to understand. It is inherently no more difficult than the notion of Judaism as a religious denomination; it is only less familiar. For persons not trained in abstract thinking, it needs to be exemplified rather than merely expounded. And that is the function of the

proposed Fellowship. It will show, by actual example, how Jews who want to live their lives within a Jewish civilization can do so in America, how Judaism can help them to realize the best that is in them and in their environment. The happiness experienced by those who actually live Judaism as an organic civilization, and not merely as a cult will be the best argument to popularize Reconstructionism with the mass of Jews. If Reconstructionism can illumine the path for its own adherents, organized in a religious fellowship, it will not be long before other Jews will walk by its light. That is how all religious movements spread; that is how Reconstructionism must spread. Until now, for lack of an adequate organizational structure, it could present its case only by exposition and argument, which are rarely effective with the masses; henceforth, it will be able to use demonstration to disseminate its ideas.

Perhaps one reason why many are under the impression that Reconstructionism has no appeal to the mass of Jews is that it has taken so long a time for the movement to pass from theoretic formulation of its principles to their practical implementation. As a matter of fact, considering the revolutionary changes which Reconstructionism seeks to effect in American Jewish life, the time has not been so very long. Nevertheless, in view of the need for changing the current of Jewish life, an accelerated tempo is urgent. For only if we act promptly and with vigor can we change the direction of that current from moving toward a liquidation of Judaism to moving toward its enhancement. In view of that urgency, the time taken in passing from formulation to implementation has been too long to satisfy the adherents of Reconstructionism or to convince those who have been watching it from the side-lines.

Its slowness in gathering momentum was, however, due, at least in part, to the very nature of its task. It is concerned with giving organic form and structure to Jewish unity. At the same time it presents a challenge to the ideologies with which most of the existing institutions of Jewish life have been operating. If it had set out to create a form of organization that would duplicate or compete with any of the existing organizations, it would have added a new element of divisiveness to Jewish life instead of healing the breaches that already exist. It had, therefore, to find a way of rallying its forces without threatening the existence or undermining the support of Jewish institutions in which Jews find whatever opportunities exist today for Jewish self-expression and self-fulfilment. It had to devise an unprecedented form of organization, one that would enable it to be of service to existing institutions rather than to gain adherents at their expense. The Fellowship affords the form of organization that satisfies these requirements.

Through the Fellowship, all who unite in viewing Judaism as a religious civilization and who wish to identify themselves with the endeavor to advance that civilization can work together without withdrawing from the congregational, rabbinic or other organizations with which they are affiliated. By working within these organizations in achieving the objectives of the Reconstructionist program, they help them to become better instruments for fulfilling the very purposes for which they were designed. At the same time, by cooperating with Fellowship chapters affiliated with other organizations, they help to transcend the old party lines and to solidify Jewish unity. To be sure, they will encounter some opposition from elements opposed to Reconstructionism in the membership of organizations with which they are affiliated. Their patient constructive efforts should, however, eventually overcome that opposition. The

strategy of Reconstructionism lies not in polemics but in cooperating with all elements in Jewry for purposes which agree with its own and in demonstrating in action the correctness of those tenets of its faith to which non-Reconstructionists do not yet consent.

Why Specifically a Reconstructionist Fellowship?

Persons not yet affiliated with the Reconstructionist movement are bound to raise the question: Why need the Fellowship be tied up with Reconstructionism? If our purpose is to bring together the most loyal, devoted and spiritually sensitive Jews to give leadership and direction to Jewish life, why limit ourselves to those who are willing to identify themselves with the Reconstructionist movement? Surely Reconstructionists have no monopoly of personal qualifications for Jewish leadership.

That is true, but it must be understood that, to rally the best minds and hearts in Jewry, we must give them a standard about which to rally. They must be made conscious of a common purpose and respond to a common call to action. That is what Reconstructionism provides.

The Reconstructionist Platform is today the only articulate expression of a tendency which characterizes all those progressive forces in American Jewish life that are seeking an adquate basis of Jewish spiritual unity. The progressive element in Reform has come increasingly to realize that Judaism means more than a creed or a cult, that it includes such secular elements as interest in the Jewish national home, in the Hebrew language and literature, in the co-operation of all Jews for the common welfare of Jewry, etc. Conservative Judaism, which has in the past avoided the formulation of a clear platform, has increasingly become aware of the danger of leaving change in Jewish standards of ritual and social behavior to mere drift and of the need to direct change on the basis of a consistent ideology. Reconstructionism provides that ideology. The attitude that Judaism has evolved and must continue to evolve, that it is an expression of the collective life of the Jewish people and is inseparable from that people has long been implicit in the teaching of leading Conservative Jews. Reconstructionism has been called "the vanguard of Conservatism." It is the vanguard of Conservatism just as it is also the vanguard of that Reform which has broken from the orthodox ideology of the founders of the Reform movement. And many Jews whose loyalty to Judaism expresses itself mainly through their adherence to Zionism have become convinced that Jewish civilization, especially in the diaspora, and particularly in America, must express itself in religious terms. The growing recognition of the place of the synagogue in the Zionist movement attests the realization of the Reconstructionist thesis that Judaism is a *religious* civilization.

The only considerable group in American Jewish life whose outlook is inherently antagonistic to the Reconstructionist viewpoint is that of those Orthodox Jews who insist on belief in an immutable, supernaturally revealed law as the basis of Judaism. That group, however, by reason of its supernaturalism and dogmatic authoritarianism is so out of harmony with the whole scientific and philosophic outlook of the modern world that it is bound to diminish, although the hysteria attendant upon persecution and war may give it a new lease on life for a time. But not all who call themselves Orthodox are to be included in this group. Many who have given up supernaturalism and accept the principle of the natural evolution of Jewish life and Jewish religion call themselves Orthodox because, on

pragmatic grounds, they advocate a maximum observance of Jewish law and custom. For them, too, there is room within a Reconstructionist Fellowship as long as they are willing to cooperate with other Jews who are less traditionalist in their attitude, for furthering Judaism as a religious civilization by the activities outlined in the Reconstructionist Platform.

Reconstructionism thus provides the broadest base on which a fellowship of the best in Jewry can unite to give leadership and direction to Jewish life. There is no other movement that can bring together so large a number of Jews with all the essential qualities for Jewish leadership on a common religious and cultural program of adequate depth and breadth.

The Hebrew Language *Is* Indispensable to Judaism

(A Rejoinder to Rabbi Barish)

By WILLIAM CHOMSKY

IN an elaborate study, Rabbi Louis Barish attempts to subject the problem of the correlation of the Hebrew language and Judaism to an objective scientific analysis, divested of sentimental or emotional coloring. On the basis of this analysis, he arrives at the conclusion that no such correlation exists, that Judaism can continue to function without the Hebrew language. (Cf. Louis Barish, Is the Hebrew Language Indispensable to Judaism, *The Reconstructionist,* Vol. IX, No. 10).

It is the purpose of this rejoinder to examine objectively the evidence adduced by Rabbi Barish and to test the validity of his conclusion.

Rabbi Barish's Thesis

Rabbi Barish starts out with the assumption "that the Jewish group falls under either one of such classifications as nationality, race, religion, culture or some combination of them." He then proceeds to show that in no case is the Hebrew language indispensable. He draws upon evidence from anthropological sources to prove that "races, languages and cultures are not distributed in parallel fashion, that their areas of distribution intercross in the most bewildering manner and that the history of each is apt to follow a distinctive course." He then goes on to quote Edward Sapir to the effect "that a group of languages need not in the least correspond to a racial group or to a cultural area;" witness the English speaking Negroes in America, or the various races using the English language.

Rabbi Barish might have added, in corroboration of this argument, that the "Hebrew" language was, in all likelihood, taken over, at the dawn of Jewish history, by the ancient Hebrews from the vanquished Canaanites, themselves a medley of races and peoples, much in the same manner as the language of the conquered Anglo-Saxons was taken over by the Norman conquerors of England. To be sure, the Hebrews modified, adapted and developed the "Canaanite" language, fashioning it into Hebrew, just as the Norman-Franch converted Anglo-Saxon into English. But the argument is essentially valid. Races and languages are not necessarily interdependent.

The anthropological authorities, on whom Rabbi Barish leans heavily, do concede that "language is an important element in creating and enhancing a consciousness of community; the possession of a common language, as of a common religion, of a common type of a civiliza-

tion, of common economic interests, etc., is a powerful factor in creating a feeling of community just as differences in these regards give a feeling of disunity." In other words, it must be admitted that "In the case of the Jewish people the Hebrew language has served historically as a mark of Jewish distinctiveness. . . . But in the light of the evidence, we are compelled to bow to the fact that it is not absolutely indispensable to Judaism as an ongoing process and a way of life."

In applying his analysis to the role of language in nationality, the author is able to marshal arguments designed to attest the absence of any correlation between a nation and a distinctive language. Thus Switzerland, Belgium, etc., although constituting distinct nationalities, do not possess languages peculiar to themselves. Furthermore, "The Jewish group itself is a splendid example of this phenomenon. During the course of its development, the Jewish people at various intervals during its long history almost completely gave up the Hebrew language or adopted the use of the popular tongue of the country in which they lived or of the dominant culture of the time. Yet, the religious and cultural products of these periods retained and reflected the spirit of Judaism."

Incidentally, the case of the Jewish group adduced by the author is not such a "splendid example" at all. At no time in Jewish history did the "Jewish people" give up "almost completely" the Hebrew language as a repository and instrumentality of its religio-cultural thinking and feeling. Some sections of the Jewish group did give up the Hebrew language in certain periods of their historical career, as, for example, in the case of Alexandrian Jewry; but it can hardly be said that their "religious and cultural products . . . retained and reflected the spirit of Judaism." In fact they left no such products, and they ended in complete assimilation and extinction. This has been the fate of all Jewries that have divorced themselves from Hebrew; they left hardly an impress on the history of Judaism. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that a nation may exist without having a language peculiar to itself.

Rabbi Barish is probably also on solid grounds when he maintains that religion is not dependent for its existence on any particular language. The *what* in religion is far more important than the *how;* that is, the essence of the particular religion, its beliefs and principles, are all-important; the language in which these beliefs and principles were originally expressed may be of some value, but it is not indispensable—witness Christianity which "has become a world-wide religion without a unifying sacred language as the possession of all Christians."

The Fundamental Fallacy

So far so good. But the fallacy of this analysis is to be found in the premise, "that the Jewish group falls under either one of such classifications as nationality, race, religion, culture or some combination of them." Since the basic assumption is wrong, as I shall try to prove, the whole argument falls to pieces. It is simply a fallacy of *non sequitur.*

Rabbi Barish's analysis reminds us of the well-known story of the five blind men who came upon an elephant. One touched the ear and he thought it was a fan. Another grasped the trunk and decided it was a rope. The third, holding the tusks, maintained that he found two sharp swords. The fourth seized a leg and was sure it was the trunk of a tree. The fifth was convinced that he touched a mountain because he chanced upon the elephant's flank. But, as every one knows, a fan, a rope, two swords, a trunk of a tree, and a mountain, even when they are in combination, do not make up an elephant.

Rabbi Barish commits the same error by using, in his analysis, the atomistic approach instead of the "field" concept used in modern science, including such exact sciences as physics and chemistry. For example, the isolated atom is no longer regarded as the unit of action. The atom is merely an integral element of the field in which it is located and with which it is continuous. The unit of action is the "field," not the atom, and the "field" is more than a mere combination of atoms. Similarly, common salt is not in the least like the sodium and chlorine of which it is composed, nor is water anything like its components, oxygen and hydrogen.

In other words, in all situations, especially those of human behavior, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. The individual elements A, B and C in a given context are what they are because they are in combination with D and, as a result of their integration and reciprocal influence. Removing element D or substituting for it another element will entail changes in the properties of each of the component elements as well as in the entire context.

It is therefore scientifically erroneous to assume with the author that the Jewish group belongs, of necessity, in "either one of such classifications as nationality, race, religion, culture, or some combination of them." The fact of the matter is that neither one nor another of such classifications fits the Jewish group. The Jewish people are certainly not just a nationality, race, culture, or religion; nor are they all these in combination, in the additive sense. They are rather a compound of all these, in the chemical sense. In such a compound, the individual characteristics of the component elements are changed and modified, just as are the properties of hydrogen and oxygen in the compound H_2O (water). Peculiar historical circumstances have operated, in the case of the Jewish people, in such a manner as to merge race, nationality, culture and religion into a composite unit which is rooted in a distinctive language, with the result of modifying the individual characteristics of each of the components. Hence the laws applying to each of them in isolation will not apply to any or all of them in integration. Thus, for example, although Christianity may continue to function without a distinctive language, Jewish religion cannot do so, because it is too intimately fused with elements of race, nationality and culture, all of which are, in turn, rooted in the Hebrew language. It is inconceivable that any of the traditional Jewish prayers can evoke, in translation, the same historical associations, cultural allusions and national memories, which they do in the original Hebrew.

Hebrew in the Evolution of Judaism

So much for Rabbi Barish's objective "scientific" analysis. But let us get back to the problem of the relationship of Judaism and the Hebrew language in terms of historical evolution and social psychology.

The Hebrew people adopted, as was stated previously, at the threshold of their historical career, the language of the vanquished Canaanites. Isaiah (19:18) refers to it as the language of Canaan. Apparently, they felt no particular attachment to the language at that time. Gradually, however, it grew upon the Jewish people and it became the vesture of their inmost thoughts and emotions. Form and content amalgamated and became inextricably interdependent. It became the "holy language," the language of the Torah, of the Jewish religion and civilization, so much so that the Rabbis frowned upon any attempts at translation, for the Torah "does not lend itself to an adequate translation." The Rabbis were profuse in their praise of the Hebrew language. They attributed the deliverance from Egyptian

bondage to the fact that the Hebrews in Egypt adhered to the Hebrew language. They regarded every Jew employing the Hebrew language as entitled to a share in the world to come. On the other hand, any Jew who fails to have his child taught the Torah in Hebrew is likened by them to one who buries his child. Hebrew became intimately blended with all the experiences of the Jewish people: their joys and sufferings; their fondest hopes, ideals and aspirations; their deepest religious yearnings; their feelings of personal love and devotion. Jewish thinkers, poets and singers throughout the ages have eulogized the Hebrew language in the most touching terms. It became the symbol of Jewish unity, distinctiveness and renaissance.

I do not wish to reiterate here the arguments I presented in my article in favor of the "centrality of Hebrew" in the Jewish curriculum ("The Hebrew Language in the Jewish Curriculum." The *Reconstructionist,* Vol. 8, No. 3). Incidentally, Rabbi Barish attacks my thesis without taking due cognizance of my arguments in its support. I merely wish to state here without fear of being challenged by any genuine student of linguistic psychology that the abandonment of the Hebrew language at this stage would devitalize Judaism and undermine its very foundations. It is unthinkable that any self-respecting people could so debase itself as to discard a language which is so closely bound up with its age-long experiences and struggles for survival, and which has served so faithfully as the repository and instrumentality of its innermost thoughts and emotions. Such a people would certainly merit the severe censure of all lovers of true culture.

One often wonders what kind of Judaism is envisaged by those who would dispense with the Hebrew language. Certainly the loyalty to a Hebraic Palestine would be regarded in their scheme as pathetic nostalgia and an obsolescent vestigial remnant. That which is of permanent and universal value in Jewish literature would, of course, be translated or paraphrased, and, after its Jewish uniqueness will thus be shed, will become part and parcel of universal literature. What will remain, then, of Judaism beyond some abstract theological concepts, which rabbis will bandy in their sermons as long as they will still find an indulgent and uncritical audience?

Is this the Judaism for the preservation of which countless martyrs throughout our history have sacrificed their lives and the lives of their beloved ones? Is this the Judaism which has been held out to us as a hope and a promise, as a vision and a beacon for a better future? If so, then the history of Jewish martyrology and the desperate struggle for Jewish survival has been a colossal fraud and self-delusion.

REALITIES AND VALUES

(Continued from Page 8)

the President know how they feel about former Sergeant Levy.

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In New York, on Sunday, October 3rd, Archbishop Spellman addressed 75,000 Catholics at a tremendous religious rally. In the course of his remarks he referred to the imminent danger in which Rome finds itself, and he prayed that our armies would not be "baited" into destroying the home of the Church. We are no more desirous than anyone of destroying cities, but we wonder just what the Archbishop meant by his statement. Does he want the Allied armies to avoid getting into a bloody battle in Rome for fear the city will be destroyed? Does he mean to imply that, if Rome is destroyed, it will be the fault of the Allies for having allowed themselves to be "baited" into a battle?

Book Notes

THE DAY OF RECKONING, by Max Radin. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Pp. 144; 1943.

THE charge is murder. The defendants are Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, Funk, Gastein, Milch and Ribbentrop. The scene is laid in a courtroom in Luxembourg. The time: 1945.

The trial takes place before five judges, chosen from a number of countries, constituting an Extraordinary International Commission, empowered by the Allied Nations (some forty of them), after capitulation by Germany. The drama of the trial hardly abates for a moment. Although the accused do not take the stand, they appear in court, and the speeches and arguments of counsel and judges keep the reader's interest without lag.

The Commission, it is made clear, was not appointed to determine war guilt and to punish it.

The defendants are charged with the commission of three murders: the murder (a) of Jacques Dubosque, Parisian; (b) of Ian Nepomuk Studicka, of Pilsen; and (c) of Joseph Kolinsky, Russian.

The facts in the first case are these: following assassinations in Paris, an order came from the German Supreme Council, signed by Funk, directing Abetz to arrest the first thirty men whose names appeared on a list sent by Funk, and to have them shot within forty-eight hours. The name of Dubosque was on that list.

As to the second case: someone had scratched the name of Hitler with an obscene epithet on the side of the apartment house in which Studicka and eight other persons lived. The Gestapo arrested all of them. Studicka was not cowed by the arrest or questioning. The local Governor communicated with Berlin. He was hanged by order of the Inner Defense Council, signed by Funk.

The third case: Kolinsky, a Jew, was a Russian soldier. He was taken prisoner by the Germans and brought into Poland. Because of his wounds, work was physically impossible for him. The officer in command ordered him killed.

The theory of defendants' guilt is that, as members of the Supreme Council (or Inner Defense Council) they were responsible for the orders and policies. While in the third case there may have been no specific order from Berlin, the policy to exterminate Jews emanated from there and was known to all officers in the field.

The defendants refused to plead or to participate in the trial in any way. The Commission appointed an attorney to represent their interests, but they disavowed him. By permission from the judges, the attorney none the less argued on their behalf as *amicus curiae.*

The chief defense was that the Commission was without jurisdiction: whatever the defendants did, they acted as heads of the German state, and as such they were answerable for their conduct only to the German people. The Commission took the position, however, that the Allied Nations had the right to try defendants for violations of international law, or offenses against reason and justice.

The prisoners were found guilty, and were condemned to death. The execution was carried out by administering cyanide gas.

A number of circumstances point to difficulties which should be considered:

(1) There were in the court-room 430 auditors, representing many, if not all, of the Allied Nations. There were soldiers stationed in the court-room, with machine-guns representing the last word in weapons. The audience was in a lynching mood: had the judgment been for the prisoners, the judges as well as the prisoners would have met death at the hands of the audience turned mob.

How, in such an atmosphere, is a fair trial possible? Indeed, it is doubtful if a fair trial could be contrived for Hitler and his colleagues under any circumstances; for no trial is fair if there is no chance of acquittal.

(2) Professor Radin says that the trial is not for war guilt but for three murders. This makes of the trial as a whole an anti-climax. The defendants are guilty of the murder of millions: to try them for the murder of several persons means a failure to face the situation as it is and the substitution therefore of a symbolic situation: it is taking a part and treating it as a whole. It is an evasion of responsibility.

(3) The creation of a special court for a single trial is hardly ever conducive to fairness. When a court is set up expressly for the purpose of trying certain persons, and it is known that after the trial the court will be dis-established, the psychological effect on the judges almost invariably is to be prejudiced against the defendants. I do not wish to be dogmatic on this point, but I would state that in the long run justice is done only where permanent courts are functioning, where judges are independent and are not appointed merely to do a certain job.

(4) What law is followed by the Commission in Professor Radin's book is not clear. At one point the President of the Commission stated that the tribunal "claims powers that over-ride the text-book doctrines of international law." It was to be bound only by reason and justice. Towards the end of the book, however, it appears from the opinion of one of the Justices that the Commission felt that the trial was proper under international law. On the whole the impression left is that the trial is founded on "principles of reason and the sense of natural justice."

These concepts—reason and natural justice—are purely formal concepts, which, to have any meaning, must be filled with detailed content. They mean no more than does our constitutional phrase "due process of law." But what is due process must constantly be defined by courts and legislatures if the phrase is to take on flesh and bones. In the course of time judicial precedents and legislative enactments have given considerable meaning to the phrase. But Professor Radin's court functions with a totally free hand.

(5) A lesser point is the fact that the judgment is not subject to review or appeal. While the right of appeal is not necessarily included in the concept of due process, under decisions, or at least dicta, of the United States Supreme Court, I am aware of no instance in the history of Anglo-American law during the past several centuries where such right was denied in a capital case.

(6) The heart of the prosecution is the belief that, even in the conduct of a war, belligerents may be guilty of crimes. As one of the Justices said: war is cruel and savage but "it is not quite . . . complete

and unrestricted savagery"; war does not grant unlimited license for wanton killing.

What is and is not "permitted" in warfare is a matter of technological development and convention. In some respects warriors were more cruel in the Homeric Wars than they are today, and in some respects they were much more considerate. I hardly think that it is possible for the law to distinguish between a "proper" killing and a "wanton" killing in combat. To build up a case on the basis of three "wanton" killings is to invite innumerable difficulties.

Nor am I sure that a service is rendered humanity by an attempt to keep war "clean"; by insisting on the existence of a belt below which one may not hit. It is better to recognize the fact that war is the dirtiest and meanest of undertakings; that it means a denial of all law and order, and a destruction of cultural and moral values. It is an outlaw sphere which rejects all concepts of law. If Hitler is to be punished, let him be punished for causing the war and not for the way he conducted it; otherwise, by implication, we recognize the legitimacy of aggressive war but condemn only some of the methods employed by the enemy to make it a successful war.

(7) Finally, I would say that it remains to be established what is to be gained by punishment of Hitler and his helpers. Is it the thought of Professor Radin that the imposition of capital punishment will teach future generations a lesson? It is to be remembered that the question of punishment of war offenders will come up only after the armistice; and at that time one should not be in a position of sponsoring punishment as an end in itself.

Can it be supposed for one moment that Hitler took heart from the fact that he knew that Napoleon was not sentenced to death but was twice sent away to isolated places? Can it be thought for one moment that if we execute Hitler future would-be despots will take the lesson of his ignoble death to heart and will remain painters or wall-paper hangers? It has yet to be established that capital punishment has any effect on tendencies reflected in criminal statistics.

This is not a plea for Hitler. It is, however, a plea to avoid concentration on the concept of punishment. The execution of Hitler will not make the world a better place in which to live. But making the world a better place in which to live will make future Hitlers impossible. If Hitler is alive after the armistice, he will be as unimportant as was Napoleon at St. Helena. Perhaps, as in the case of Napoleon, humanity will be served if Hitler is made comfortable at another St. Helena, and is given enough paper and ink to write himself out in memoirs and monographs on military and political topics?

After the war humanity's greatest need will be the re-birth of values rooted in a desire for peace, righteousness, loving-kindness. Retribution is no kin to these values: its roots are in a blood-soaked soil. We should fly from it as from a pestilence.

MILTON R. KONVITZ